533

A

# SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

## UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AT ST. MARY'S CHURCH,

ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1779;

Being the ANNIVERSARY of His MAJESTY'S happy ACCESSION to the THRONE.

By JAMES WILLIAMSON, A.M.
FELLOW OF HERTFORD COLLEGE.

LONDON:

Printed for and sold by J. DODSLEY, Pall-Mall; and also by W. JACKSON and Co. Oxford.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

1. TIM. CHAP. II. V. 1, 2.

*I exhort therefore, that firſt of all ſupplications, prayers, interceſſions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty.*

IT appears, from the variety of expreſſions uſed by the Apoſtle, that he means to include in them all kinds of prayer; and from the motive which he aſſigns for this duty, that he conſidered it as of the greateſt importance.

But however proper and neceſſary a compliance with this exhortation may be on all occaſions; yet we ſeem to be more particularly called upon in the duty of this day, which is ſet apart for commemorating the manner of ſucceſſion to the throne of theſe kingdoms, to expreſs our thankfulneſs to Almighty God for this invaluable part of our conſtitution, by which, perhaps, more than any other, we are enabled to lead quiet and peaceable lives. For when the rule of

ſucceſſion to the crown falls in with the common method of transferring private property, as far as the circumſtances are ſimilar; this alone will give the right a ſanction in the minds of the people, which no force could procure; and when this rule is moreover agreeable to the laws of nature, it may with the greateſt propriety be conſidered as of divine appointment. And if both theſe circumſtances concur in the order of ſucceſſion, the opinion of men and the favour of God will unite to ſtifle the projects of the moſt daring and ambitious; making the death of a Prince (the ſource of commotions in many countries where there is a pretender to the crown) but an ordinary occurence, which neither diſturbs nor retards the regular adminiſtration of affairs.

And indeed not only this, but every part of our conſtitution has the moſt direct tendency to enable us to lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty. But the natural means of enjoying theſe bleſſings, being ſo well ſecured to us, the great danger is, that we loſe a ſenſe of the bleſſings themſelves, and alſo neglect to look any farther than the viſible forms of government for our proſperity and ſecurity.

Becauſe even the greateſt bleſſings, when enjoyed in common with a multitude, are apt

apt to be overlooked or undervalued: and, even when attended to, are very generally aſcribed to a wrong cauſe; which, we have reaſon to fear, is the caſe in the preſent inſtance.

For thoſe, who look at human tranſactions from a great diſtance, are apt to aſcribe the good or ill ſucceſs of things to the men who are immediately entruſted with the management of them. On the other hand the oſtenſible conductors of affairs, finding how often things fall out beſides their expectations, having alſo the merit of many proſperous events undeſervedly aſcribed to them, are very ready, with a little reſerve to their own wiſdom and fore-ſight, to make every thing depend upon fortune, by which expreſſion they would inſinuate that human affairs have juſt ſuch a ſtability as a throw of the dice could give them. For however well diſpoſed a man might be to flatter his own vanity, yet human affairs ſeldom keep ſuch an even regular courſe, as not to convince both the wiſeſt and the weakeſt, how little the event of things is in their power.

The firſt ſort of People are miſled by a total want of experience; and the ſecond, by reſting their experience upon too narrow a foundation.

Becauſe others, who look farther into the cauſes of things, can diſcover the providence of God, co-operating with the proper uſe and improvement of the faculties of mankind, for bringing about particular events. And that God acts in this, not according to the eſtimation which we might ſuppoſe a Being of infinite perfections to make of things; but ſuiting his interpoſitions to the importance of the things to us, condeſcends to take upon himſelf to be our teacher, and as it were to act upon human ideas; favouring with ſucceſs the honeſt exerciſe and improvement of our faculties; and at the ſame time leaving the confident projects of the ignorant to their naturalc onſequences, in order to teach us wiſdom and humility.

Not that theſe diſpenſations keep ſuch a regular and conſtant order as to encourage the moſt ſkilful in a preſumptuous confidence, which might induce them to think that they could be able to proceed without having God for their protector and guide.

To men of ſuch ſentiments as theſe, this day of Public Thankſgiving will, with the greateſt propriety, be conſidered as one of the means whereby we may expect the grace of God to be conferred upon the king and kingdom; and conſequently will be obſerved by ſuch with ſtrict devotion and hearty

thank-

thankfulneſs: behaving themſelves like men, who do not conſider the affairs of the univerſe as carried on by the laws of matter and motion; nor as under the direction of an intelligent being, who is indifferent to the human race, except in as far as they make a part of the general ſyſtem of things; but as under the direction of Him, who, by the faculties which he has beſtowed upon us, his providential care over us, and the means which he has uſed for our redemption, proves himſelf to be in reality our Father which is in heaven.

But it is much to be feared that many of thoſe who are engaged in the buſy ſcenes of life; eſpecially if they have added to their own little and partial experience, a ſmattering of the preſent faſhionable philoſophy, will be apt to look upon ſuch ſolemn days as this, only as a mere matter of form, or rather a ſerious farce, with which the wiſdom of our ſuperiours has thought it neceſſary to indulge the prejudices of the vulgar. And ſo far from thinking that the moſt ſacred obſervance of ſuch days can convey any particular grace to a nation, they look upon the Chriſtian Religon itſelf as at variance with thoſe principles, by which human ſocieties are improved and brought to perfection; or at beſt that it is but a

dead weight upon arts and induſtry, where it meets with encouragement and protection from government.

Now tho' it might be ſufficient to ſay, if men were diſpoſed to ſee with their own eyes, that ſuch philoſophers and politicians have derived their knowledge of Chriſtianity, from the ignorance, idleneſs, and hypocricy of convents abroad; improved a little by obſerving the nature and effects of field-preaching among ourſelves, and that they need only have recourſe to the Bible to be better informed; yet conſidering the complexion of the times, a particular vindication of our Religion from this calumny appears to be the more neceſſary, becauſe the active part of the nation are miſled by the apparent excellence of our conſtitution, which I am affraid has been teaching them to look no farther for ſupport or ſecurity. But if thoſe men ſhould be infected with ſuch notions, whoſe opinions have a larger ſphere of activity than the compaſs of their own brains, the conſequences to a people are alarming indeed. For woe to that nation whoſe rulers forget God.

And that I may not do this ſuperficially, I ſhall give the infidel cauſe every advantage, by introducing the ableſt of their order to ſpeak for the reſt: and as his argument

ment is ſeaſoned with railery, it cannot be ſuppoſed to want any thing neceſſary towards an infidel ſtandard of truth.

" True Chriſtians (ſays Mr. Bayle) would, " methinks, conſider themſelves upon earth " only as ſtrangers and pilgrims, aiming " only at Heaven, their true country. They " would not interrupt their prayers and " works of charity, to procure a worldly " gain, not even by lawful means; having " food and raiment they would be content; " and far from giving themſelves trouble " to enrich their children, they would think " that they left them ſufficient inheritance, " if they taught them to deſpiſe worldly " riches, never to revenge themſelves, and " to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly."

" If you will ſeriouſly reflect upon this, " you will eaſily find that a nation wholly " compoſed of ſuch people, would ſoon be " ſubdued, if a formidable enemy endeavoured to conquer it; for they could not " be furniſhed with good ſoldiers, nor with " money enough to ſupport the expences of " a war, Such Chriſtians could not be fit " for a battle, being uſed to patience, " meekneſs, ſufference, mortification, prayer, and the contemplation of heavenly " things; they would be like ſheep among " wolves, if they were ſent to the borders

" of their country to repulſe an army com-
" poſed of old experienced ſoldiers and offi-
" cers. Add to this, that the commanders
" and leaders of theſe good men, being
" themſelves pious Chriſtians, would be
" too ſcrupulous to make uſe of a thouſand
" tricks and artifices, without which it is
" impoſſible to reſiſt a ſkilful enemy."

Now, in oppoſition to this ſmooth-tongued ſlander, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that true Chriſtianity is conſiſtent with the moſt active ſcenes of life; and that thoſe paſſages of ſcripture, which have been ſuppoſed to favour the contrary opinion, admit of a very different and very natural explanation,

It is true that Chriſtians are particularly enjoined to be obedient to governours: but this is upon ſuppoſition that the end of all government is to encourage good works, and to diſcourage or puniſh the evil. And that this is the end of all governments, even the worſt; and that they attain to this end comparatively ſpeaking, will be allowed by every one, who is in any degree ſenſible of the advantages which mankind enjoy, and the ſecurity which they derive from the accumulated courage and wiſdom of a ſociety of any conſiderable extent and influence.

For

For if we carry our thoughts as far back as experience will conduct us, we ſhall find no original compacts; but mankind, from a dread of ſolitude, inſult, and oppreſſion, poſſeſſed with unbounded fear, and offering, where they ſaw any proſpect of protection, unconditional ſubmiſſion.

And indeed in a rude ſtate of ſociety, this ſeems to be all that either the circumſtances or faculties of the generality of mankind ſeem to fit them for, or entitle them to. Becauſe human nature in its depraved and undiſciplined ſtate, appears fit for nothing, but to be led at the diſcretion of ſuperiour abilities.

It is abſurd, therefore, to think that the wiſeſt form of government, could either make men happy, or be itſelf of long duration, unleſs thoſe, who are to be the ſubjects of it, were previouſly and properly prepared by education. For it is certain that there are, at preſent, nations in the world to whom our excellent conſtitution would be an intolerable grievance. The human race muſt be made men, before they are capable of ſubmitting to a regular government, or before they can have any very high claims upon their governours.

New relations therefore, will ariſe between the ſubjects and their governours, upon every

every improvement of their faculties; and the more they are qualified to act as men, the more they deſerve to be treated as ſuch: and to the credit of human nature it may be ſaid, that man is naturally neither inſenſible to merit, nor fond of oppreſſing his inferiours.

When the Chriſtian Religion, therefore, enjoins obedience to governours; it may be ſuppoſed to expreſs this general propoſition, that, in order to make progreſs in arts, morals, or Religion, mankind muſt keep together; and that whatſoever has a tendency to deſtroy this union, is criminal, and ought to be avoided. The Chriſtian Religion does not enter into the merits of any form of government, but only in general aſſerts that order is better than confuſion; and ſeems to leave us room to infer that mankind have more need of information upon ſuch points as relate to the duty of ſubjects, than of governours; not that theſe latter are ſuppoſed in ſcripture to be incapable of departing from their duty; for St. Paul (certainly with a view to his reformation) reaſoned before Felix of righteouſneſs, temperance and judgment to come.

But without pretending to fix the limits of power and ſubmiſſion, which muſt be relative to the improvement and natural diſpoſition

diſpoſition of the people, we may affirm in general, that as all confuſion and diſcord, error and vice, ariſe from an ignorance of the relation which we ſtand in to God and to one another; whatever has a tendency moſt effectually to remove this ignorance, will be the moſt rational and firm cement of human ſocieties: for without a knowledge of theſe relations in ſome meaſure, we may be driven like cattle, but we can never be governed as rational creatures.

Nor will the greateſt enemies to Chriſtianity pretend to deny that its precepts and doctrines give the fulleſt diſcoveries of theſe relations; reſting the credit of them upon an authority, which can leave no doubt of their obligation to the perſon who receives them. Nor is this all; for they have moreover this ſingular advantage of being ſo well ſuited to the capacities of the vulgar, that they are found capable of making perſons, even of very mean abilities, ſublime and rational divines and moraliſts, upon thoſe very points where the wiſeſt heathen philoſophers have produced nothing but uncertain ſpeculations. So that it ſeems no very difficult matter to determine, whether the plain and poſitive precepts of the Chriſtian Religion, operating upon all ranks in a ſtate; or the obſcure and vague ſpeculations of a few

few philoſophers were more likely to form a rational and vigorous government.

Surely it would be very difficult to aſſign any reaſon why a government founded upon ſuch principles, which would neceſſarily have the beſt morals, ſhould not alſo have the greateſt ſhare of political liberty, and the greateſt influence in the affairs of the world. For as it would betray a total ignorance of our Religion to pretend that its object is not to reform the manners of mankind, it of conſeqence muſt give a ſanction to all thoſe meaſurcs which are neceſſary for the preſervation of peace, good order, and good morals in a ſociety.

But it is pretended, that, from the account which our Saviour himſelf has given, ſuch a kingdom as this could not be his kingdom, which he declares not to be of this world.

To this it may be anſwered, that what our Saviour ſays of his kingdom was addreſſed to a particular people, and applicable to particular circumſtances; and not at all propoſed as rules of conduct for different people in very different circumſtances.

And this will be obvious to every one who obſerves, that in order to make the character of our Saviour conſiſtent with the predictions concerning him, it was neceſ-

ſary

ſary that he ſhould not raiſe the jealouſy of the Romans: for if he had been tried by them as a ſeditious perſon, and condemned, he could not poſſibly have been the Meſſiah of the prophets; and how neceſſary he himſelf thought it to keep up to this character appears evidently from his uſing the expreſſion ſo often, that he did ſuch a thing that the prophecies might be fulfilled. And the many prudential ſteps which he is obſerved to take, have all the ſame tendency, namely, that the evidence from prophecy might be full and compleat. To the ſame purpoſe alſo he declares, that it is not from any dread of his enemies, but only to keep up to the character foretold of him, that he takes ſuch ſteps as ſeem to imply ſome apprehenſions for himſelf.

Nor need we doubt but the Roman governor would have been alarmed, if our Saviour had been followed by multitudes of tumultuous people; and accordingly we find his doctrine particularly calculated to diſcourage ſuch; and we may fairly conclude that this, among other ends, was the intention of ſome of his longeſt diſcourſes to the people: And the expreſſion which introduces the Sermon on the Mount is very remarkable to this purpoſe, " And ſeeing " the multitudes." And it is very probable that

that, after the clear and poſitive declaration of his ſentiments, as we find them delivered in this Sermon, theſe multitudes diſperſed quietly and with no ſmall diſappointment, upon finding that he was not the perſon which they had taken him for.

Now altho' from ſeeing his miracles, they might be well ſatisfied that he had power to gratify all their wiſhes, yet after ſuch an explicit declaration of his principles, they well know that he never would comply with their inclinations. So that this conſideration alone will account for many of the expreſſions which have given a handle for ſuch miſrepreſentations as thoſe of Bayle: and, inſtead of ſuppoſing them addreſſed to Chriſtians in all ages, and all circumſtances, will juſtify us in concluding that they were ſpoken to the thoughts of the particular people who then heard him.

And this will be ſtill more evident, when it is conſidered what perverſe notions the Jews entertained concerning the nature of Chriſt's kingdom; which will be found to give a particular force and propriety to the doctrines contained in the ſermon on the Mount, when conſidered as intended to cure their prejudices and correct their miſtakes concerning the nature of his kingdom. And it was certainly a neceſſary part of his office

office upon all occaſions to ſet the Jews right in this particular; and to ſhew them the impropriety of the Meſſiah's taking ſuch meaſures to eſtabliſh his kingdom, however great his power, which inſtead of reforming the manners of mankind, would give the Jews a licence for indulging themſelves in all kinds of exceſs, and become a ſtanding authority for the practice of tyranny in all ſucceeding ages.

For if we conſider the ſtate of the Jews at the time of our Saviour's coming; we may eaſily imagine with what ſpirit many of the people followed him, upon ſeeing the miracles which he performed. Eſpecially as his miracles could leave them no room to doubt, that he had certainly the power, provided he had the inclination of reſtoring the kingdom to Iſrael.

And the common principles of human nature will tell us what would be their expectations when ſuch an event took place. No leſs, we may believe, than trampling their enemies under their feet; indulging themſelves in revenge for real or ſuppoſed injuries, and expecting beſides an opportunity of gratifying every ſenſual appetite.

Every one muſt allow that this ſingular ſituation of the Jews, would require particular admonitions and inſtructions which could

could neither be neceſſary nor applicable to any other nation in the world. Surely if we would underſtand the words of a ſpeaker, it is neceſſary to take into conſideration the character and circumſtances of his hearers to whom he particularly addreſſes himſelf. Even a people who had eyes to ſee but would not perceive, and ears to hear but would not underſtand, wanted particular admonitions and inſtructions, which tho' fruitleſs with reſpect to themſelves, were never the leſs neceſſary to juſtify their condemnation. And altho' a number of circumſtances had been concuring with their own natural diſpoſition to " make the heart " of this people fat, and to make their ears " heavy, and ſhut their eyes;" yet they ſo far perfectly underſtood our Saviour's diſcourſes as peculiarly applicable to themſelves, and felt the force and authority of them, as carrying a particular ſting, when conſidered as diſappointing their fondeſt hopes and expectations; which it appears they preferred to every other conditon, however certain or eligible.

And that theſe reproofs are continued through the whole of our Saviour's miniſtry may, among other reaſons, be owing to this; that the wiſer and more politic ſort of Jews might for ſome time imagine that he made

made uſe of policy to conceal his real deſigns, and only waited for a fit opportunity to put them in execution.

But at length the whole nation gave up all hopes of deliverance thro' his means; having been frequently diſappointed both by his miracles and doctrine: The former confirming them more and more in their notions of his irreſiſtible power, and the little occaſion which he had for watching favourable opportunities to put any ſcheme in execution; while the latter would convince them that they could expect no benefit from him, in the only way which they wiſhed.

And thus the joint influence of his doctrine and miracles produced a moſt extraordinary effect among the Jews, and what neither of them could have done ſingly; for their minds having been ſo long agitated between hope and fear, they felt their diſappointment ſo ſenſibly, that it was followed by the hatred and deteſtation of the whole nation, which appeared with aggravated maliciouſneſs unparaleled in the hiſtory of any people. For their behaviour when he was condemned, and at the time of his crucifixion, ſhews the ſpiteful gratification which they enjoyed in thinking that they had been able to deſtroy a power which they could not turn to their own advantage.

And in order to carry their triumph over him as far as poſſible, we here ſee men of character, condition, and education, attending the execution of a perſon whom they knew to be innocent; and behaving in ſuch a manner as would have diſgraced the loweſt of the vulgar at the execution of the greateſt criminal.

From this account of the expectations, circumſtances, and diſpoſitions of the Jews, it is very eaſy not only to underſtand what our Saviour means, when he ſays, that his kingdom is not of this world; but alſo how neceſſary it was for him to declare that thoſe who could be the ſubjects of his kingdom, muſt be people of very different tempers, characters, and expectations, from the generality of the Jews.

But farther; the directions given by our Saviour to his apoſtles, and the inſpirations which they afterwards received by the Holy Spirit, had a particular reference to the manner which was to be followed in propagating the goſpel thro' the different regions of the world: and it was neceſſary that this alſo ſhould be peculiarly applicable to the nature and ſtate of his kingdom: becauſe this Religion, like its author, had a particular character to ſupport, which was to diſtinguiſh it from all other Religions, and

verify

verify its author's predictions concerning it, both as to the manner of its propagation, and the oppoſition which it was to meet with in the world; which would furniſh the fulleſt proofs that the eſtabliſhing of this religion was not the work of man. Neither indeed could human means have been anſwerable to the effect produced, becauſe the kingdom of Satan was already in poſſeſſion of all ſuch; and the Rulers of the darkneſs of this world had applied every one of them to their purpoſes in ſome ſhape or other.

Upon the whole then it appears, that thoſe who adopt Bayle's notion of our religion, have never attended to our Saviour's prophetic character, and the circumſtances and expectations of the Jews; and are moreover miſled by not diſtinguiſhing between the orders and directions given for propagating the Chriſtian Religion, and the Chriſtian Religion itſelf; than which no two things can be more diſtinct. For the viſible kingdom of Satan muſt be aboliſhed in any nation, before it can have the leaſt pretenſions to call itſelf Chriſtian: and while this work was a carrying on, the moſt effectual aid which the pious Chriſtian could lend muſt be derived from his prayers and works of Charity. The ſtrong holds of Satan were

too well fortified to yield to the carnal weapons of human warfare. And the firſt Chriſtians were not nations of Chriſtians, but as ſheep among wolves; and therefore a more than ordinary circumſpection would be neceſſary: and as human ſocieties would not protect them, it was alſo neceſſary that they ſhould be conſtantly looking for ſupernatural protection from God.

But after this viſible kingdom of Satan was aboliſhed by the extirpation of idol worſhip; human affairs, we may ſuppoſe, returned into their natural channel: and it is agreeable to the general plan of God's dealings with mankind, to lend them no farther ſupernatural aid than what their circumſtances abſolutely require.

We may therefore conclude that, when a nation had forſaken its idolatries, it was then brought within the dominion of reaſon, one great ſource of error and corruption being removed: for men, even with their ordinary frailties about them, would be in a more hopeful condition than they were before; becauſe, whenever they became ſenſible of their vices, they were now reduced to the neceſſity of having recourſe to the propper cure for them, being no longer able to put their truſt in their former lying vanities, whatever might be their inclination.

nation. And altho' when they embraced the Chriſtian Religion, it would inform them, that after they had done their beſt, they were ſtill to conſider themſelves as unprofitable ſervants; yet the being ſenſible of this, is all that is required towards acceptance with God; which removes every difficulty ariſing from a conſideration of that degree of perfection which the Chriſtian Religion requires.

Nor is the injunction of ſuch duties as are beyond our power to perform either unneceſſary or unreaſonable, becauſe it is no more than what our own conſcience exacts of us upon almoſt every occaſion. It is the ſtrange corrupted condition of human nature, which requires ſuch a diſpenſation, which is by no means confined to religious perfecttion: for every one feels within himſelf higher ideas of perfection of every kind, than what he knows it poſſible for him to reach.

But moreover the goſpel does not contain a body of poſitive laws, but counſels: Chriſt is not to be conſidered ſo much in the light of a lawgiver as a teacher: and no teacher would ever make the capacity of the dulleſt of his ſcholars a meaſure for the perfection of his plan; but would rather limit

ſimit it by his own abilities, or the degree of improvement which the circumſtances of his ſcholars required; or he might very properly direct them to a degree of perfection which he knew it was impoſſible for them to arrive at; becauſe the very aſpiring after excellence has its advantages both in religious improvement and the natural uſe of our faculties: for as the ſearch after things, probably beyond the reach of of our faculties, has been the occaſion of many uſeful diſcoveries in ſcience and the common affairs of life; ſo the aiming at perfection in religious duties will certainly tend very much to the improvement of mankind. And one, who is able to make but a ſmall progreſs in either, when he does his beſt, is rather an object of pity than of cenſure: but he who boaſts of acquirements which he does not poſſeſs, when the ſubject is human knowledge, brings upon himſelf the contempt of every one who can judge of his pretenſions, as the religious hypocrite draws upon himſelf the contempt of God,

Thus there is a ſtrict analogy which takes place with regard to the improvement of all our faculties: and as it requires the united efforts of large and ſeparate ſocieties of men

to

to exhibit a proper diſplay of our natural abilities; ſo we learn from experience that the virtues and graces of the Chriſtian character demand an active life and intercourſe with the world, both to produce them, and afford them opportunities of exerting themſelves.

The powerful means which were uſed for eſtabliſhng our Religion, and its progreſs in extirpating idolatry, when its profeſſors (humanly ſpeaking) were few, mean, and contemptible, direct us to its author, and prove him to be omnipotent; at the ſame time that its extenſive and benevolent effects in humanizing large and powerful nations, and making them, comparatively ſpeaking, lovers of their enemies, no leſs demonſtrate his infinite wiſdom and goodneſs.

I ſhall conclude with a paralel drawn between Infidel and Chriſtian Rulers, and leave every one to judge in which of their hands the intereſts of mankind are moſt likely to ſuffer.

In order to this, let us conſider how many natural and acquired infirmities a man in authority has to ſtruggle againſt, who conſiders other men only as the inſtruments of his will and pleaſure; eſpecially if he himſelf acknowledges no ſuperiour: we need

need not be ſurpriſed if ſuch a perſon ſhould every moment forget both his duty and himſelf. Thus the rank manner of life, and even the education of a king, add ſuch an increaſe to the ordinary infirmities of human nature, that it is not ſurpriſing if he ſhould become both a monſter of voluptuouſneſs and cruelty, eſpecially if his kingdom ſhould be curſed with many great and good men.

But even in a government where his ſubjects are not conſidered as his ſlaves, a king has to ſtruggle againſt all the advantages of this world. He is ſurrounded with alurements to pleaſure, and has numberleſs inducements to gratify his pride and vanity; beſides conſtant opportunities, unleſs he be worſe employed in projects of ambition, of indulging himſelf in ſloth and luxury. And I believe the inſtances would be very rare, where ſuch a perſon, upon almoſt every occaſion, would not become a ſlave to ſelf-will and ſelf-conceit: Becauſe he will conſtantly find a great ſcarcity of faithful friends, and a number of humble flatterers, who inſtead of giving him good and ſeaſonable advice, much leſs of taking upon themſelves the ungrateful and uncourt-like office of reproving him; would rather endeavour

all

all they could to remove thoſe obſtacles which might check his will, croſs his humour, or curb his luſts and paſſions.

Now all theſe infirmities would appear with new and aggravated circumſtances in a king, whoſe kingdom was not hereditary; the ſtation to which he was raiſed being in ſome meaſure unexpected, whatever might be his pretenſions, would naturally fill him with ungovernable inſolence, and beſides his own paſſions, he would have thoſe of his adherents to gratify at the ſame time; and for the inſecurity of his ſtation would prompt him to acts of cruelty as long as he had any competitors left. And all authority, delegated from ſuch princes, muſt partake of, and carry along with it, the moſt pernicious of their vices. So that as ſuch a king, and magiſtrates, are ſuppoſed neither to fear God nor regard man; they will rule the people with a rod of iron; or if any thing like juſtice could be obtained thro' their means, it muſt be derived from the conſtant importunity of the people, leſt by their continual coming they ſhould weary them.

I do not ſay that any man could be ſo deſtitute of religious and moral principles as is here ſuppoſed; but the argument is not the leaſt weakened on that account;

becauſe the progreſs and improvement of the infidel plan, is to bring mankind to this degree of diabolical perfection.

But, on the other hand, if we ſuppoſe a prince to be a true Chriſtian, what an infallible rule does the Chriſtian Religion afford him for the regulation and government of his paſſions; and for detecting the hypocriſy and ignorance of his flatterers. How would it teach him to labour to the utmoſt of his abilities, to promote the peace and happineſs of his ſubjects, not for temporal ends, but from a conſciouſneſs that he and they were equally accountable to a Judge who is no reſpecter of perſons; but who will judge impartially the king and beggar according to their deeds.

And as it is impoſſible that a Chriſtian King could employ any other than pious Chriſtians in places of truſt and conſequence; the ſame ſpirit of circumſpection, ariſing from the ſame conſciouſneſs of the conſtant preſence of an impartial witneſs and judge of all their actions and thoughts, muſt give vigour, firmneſs, and effect to every exertion of the State, which could never intentionally be directed otherwiſe than to promote the peace, happineſs, and order of the ſociety.

But

But as to the ſituation of ſuch a State, with reſpect to other ſocieties, we muſt ſuppoſe it too ſenſible of the great advantages which it derives, both from its religious and civil eſtabliſhment, not to uſe every means which human prudence could dictate for its preſervation: and unleſs we could ſuppoſe ſuch pious Chriſtians never to have read the Bible; they would confidently expect the particular favour of God conveyed to them by the means of ſolemn days of thankſgiving, by which, as a Nation, they acknowledged their dependence upon him.

But even ſuppoſing the Supreme Being only to let his providence concur with the natural conſequences which ſuch principles and morals would produce; if ſuch a State were aſſaulted with a thouſand tricks and ſtratagems of a ſkilful enemy, we might apply to it, what our Saviour applies to an individual, when he ſays, "Therefore whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wiſe man, which built his houſe upon a rock, and the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that houſe; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

THE END.

3 FE 64